

After the Lunar Landing

Plans for a Christmas flight of Apollo 8 around the moon, coming so soon after the successful completion of new manned space flights by the United States and the Soviet Union, make it plain that both nations are well-advanced in their preparations for putting a man on the moon. When that feat has been accomplished and the first human visitors have returned safely, the race for national prestige in this field will have been decided. Now is not too early to consider what shall follow that historic milestone in mankind's scientific progress.

Fortunately, the Space Treaty has already settled one basic issue. There will be no national appropriation of the moon, and therefore no national rivalries over lunar territory akin to the struggles among Spain, Portugal, Britain and France for dominance in the New World of Christopher Columbus. The way is open, therefore, for the broadest sort of international cooperation in lunar exploration and development.

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First priority will probably have to go to some form of study of the moon's surface and subsurface features. This examination will inevitably emphasize the search for lunar resources that can be employed to meet the needs of the human visitors, and thus reduce the enormous cost of rocketing needed supplies from the earth. Beyond this exploration, the moon—once accessible to men—will immediately become a laboratory world for expanding knowledge in astronomy, physics, chemistry, geology and a host of other sciences. For both purposes—lunar exploration and use of the moon as a site for research—it will be desirable to create one or more permanent manned communities on the moon as soon as possible.

The costs of even a minimum program along these lines will be enormous, especially if the first permanent lunar settlement is to be functioning within a reasonable time, say by 1980 or so. Resources will have to be gathered from as many nations as possible if man is to take full advantage of the moon's unprecedented accessibility.

As the pioneers in space, the United States and the Soviet Union have the responsibility now to begin organization of the vast international effort that must follow the coming triumph of human courage and human ingenuity. And the United Nations, of course, is the body whose flag must fly over future lunar settlements and whose component institutions must be harnessed to the task of meeting the extraterrestrial problems ahead.

25 YEAR RE-REVIEW